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# FAMILY PRAYER.

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## A LECTURE

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE MEMBERS OF THE BRISTOL BRANCH

OF

The English Church Union,

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BY THE

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# PREFACE.

THE following Essay was delivered as a lecture in the Bristol Athenæum, to the members and associates of the English Church Union, belonging to the Bristol Branch of that great Society. At its conclusion the members present united in a vote requesting that the lecture might be sent to the "*Ecclesiastic*," in order that they might be able to read it more at leisure. That theological monthly honoured it by admission in its May and June numbers, and the present issue is a reprint from its pages.

I need not say that it is not here attempted in describing the ancient choir services of the Church of England to deal exhaustively with any portion of that august subject. Those services are described only so far fully as seems necessary to a comprehension of the Private Offices which are derived from them. Many beautiful features, (e.g., the "*Invitatory*,") are not even alluded to, simply because they do not bear in any way upon the offices of which I am here treating.

G. M.

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# FAMILY PRAYER.

In all the great movements which have agitated the Church of God, it has ever been found that the battle has raged most fiercely around the Liturgical formularies, which are the expression of her faith. "*Lex supplicandi est lex credendi*," says the old Latin proverb. Show me a man's prayers, and I will tell you his belief. There is no room for controversy there. When the soul approaches the veil which hides the Invisible, and yearns to win to the gloom of her solitude some outgoing from the radiance of His glory, she knows full well that here at least all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom she has to do. And therefore, in the forms which prayer takes, and the words into which it moulds itself, there is a *reality*, such as we may seek for in vain in any other expression of the human mind or the human heart.

For instance, if I wish to know what is the mind of the Church from the beginning on such a subject as the Eucharistic Sacrifice, I go to the early Fathers and writers of the Church; and I know that in their Commentaries, and Letters, and Sermons, I shall find the information of which I am in search. But with much more satisfaction would I go to their "*Liturgies*" or "*Communion Services*," for there the heart speaks out unreservedly, and that which in their writings they explain in theory, they here practise in reality to the benefit of their souls. Uncertain and ambiguous formularies on the other hand, make an uncertain and semi-infidel belief. It has occurred at certain epochs in Church history, that the rulers of the Church have so composed the wording of her formularies from prudential motives, in times of theological agitation, as to veil great and important Catholic truths in some obscurity. And the result has ever been most disastrous. So far from these truths thus escaping the rough-handling apprehended, they have been themselves the battle-ground of conflicting parties within the Church, to the great loss of souls, and often to the imminent danger of the Church herself.

Hence the interest which attaches at all times, (and at this time most especially,) to Liturgical studies. Our Liturgy and the

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Ritual in which its naked limbs are vested, as a protection against the cold of careless unconcern, and as an attraction to the loving hearts of the faithful,—these are the object of incessant and most dangerous attack. And the times are full of anxiety. English Churchmen must make up their minds to fight shoulder to shoulder, or it will go hard with us. And the standard around which we are ranged is the Book of Common Prayer. We will not allow this to be emasculated. It contains our belief as Christians and Catholics, formulated in the Creeds, and in the prayers which we address to Almighty GOD as very members incorporate in the mystical body of His SON.

"But," it will be said, "what has this to do with *Family Prayer?* The Book of Common Prayer is concerned with the Public Services of the Church of England, and these Public Services are in no way connected with Family or Private Prayer."

In one sense this objection is true: in another it is not.

It is true that there is no office of Family Prayer in the Prayer Book. There is one, (a very poor affair,) in the American book; but there is none in the English. To be sure all Priests and Deacons, if they do not say Morning and Evening Prayer publicly in their churches, are bound by oath to say them privately, "not being let by sickness or other urgent cause." Of course, they all do this regularly, for "Brutus is an honourable man,—they are all honourable men,"—and thus, as we do not hear much of public daily service around us, the Matins and Evensong of the Anglican office must be used by the 20,000 English clergy as a book for the most part of *Private* Prayer. But this does not apply to the laity who form the bulk of the nation. The Book of Common Prayer contains no office which is suitable to them.

Are then the recognized offices of the Church valueless to the laity for the purpose of Family and Private Prayer?

By no means, as I shall hope to show clearly in the course of this lecture. How this comes to be so, you will see more distinctly I hope, when we have considered what the Prayers of the Church really are, in character, and what relationship the different Public Services in the Prayer Book bear to one another. A few words in the first instance on the *nature* of Prayer to GOD.

And first of all what Prayer is *not*.

I. Prayer is not an *oblique sermon*. This is the great failing of modern prayers. If you attend family worship in which any of the manuals are used which contain those particularly long prayers, composed within the present century,—Thornton's, for instance, or the meagre little book composed by the late Bishop of London, and published by the S. P. C. K.,—you will be aware that, though the prayers used are nominally addressed to Almighty GOD, they are in reality addressed to your soul instead. They are, in fact, not prayers at all, but meditations. This vice has arisen from a misapprehension

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of the nature of prayer, closely connected with the subjectivity which is the bane of modern popular religionism. So long as prayer is looked upon, not as a tribute given to GOD as His due, but as a means merely for kindling the selfish faith of the individual, it will degenerate from adoration into the bare expression of spiritual discipline. Hence it comes that an Englishman will select his church and clergyman, (or "minister,") because, he will tell you, he "gets good" there. In reality he feels a sentiment within him which he considers to be "*faith*," but which is probably more nearly connected with the feelings, called into more active energy by something in the service or sermon peculiarly adapted to his temperament. Indeed, for the Englishman's modern religion, it is evident that the sermon, which appeals directly, and with adaptability, to his feelings or his faith, (whichever term we adopt,) must be more congenial than the prayers, which can only in a secondary way effect the same object. Hence that modern form of private prayer which we call the "oblique sermon." To illustrate what I mean, I will select as a specimen one of the prayers published within a century after the Reformation. This is how it begins:—

"*A Prayer for our brethren, that are in adversity.*

"Most gracious and merciful SAVIOUR, we find by experience, almost every minute of an hour, that this life of ours is fraughted with adversities, which grow unto every one of us, either out of the sinfulness of the flesh, or of each man's own folly, or of other men's spitefulness. Besides this, other men's misfortunes are both an increase and an example of our own. For we see by them that the like may befall us, and brotherly charity compelleth us to be sorry for them. In respect whereof Thou hast commanded us to weep with them that weep . . . . Hearken, therefore, unto our prayers," &c. &c., (at great length.)

All this is very well, but it is not prayer.

II. But if, in the composition of prayers, the oblique sermon is to be avoided, still more is the *oblique attack*. This is no visionary danger. We have known, not long ago, most bitter party venom discharged through the medium of extempore prayer. But, to avoid all personalities ourselves, we may mention, as a specimen of this kind of prayer, the well-known suffrage, which actually was inserted in the early days of the Reformation in the Litany, and thus used with authority, to this effect:—

". . . From the tyranny of the Bishop of Rome, and all his detestable enormities, . . .
*Good Lord, deliver us.*"

Here is another, somewhat later, to much the same effect, written by the well-known Mr. John Foxe. This sentence occurs in the sixth folio page of one single prayer:—

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"And forasmuch as the Bishop of Rome is wont on every Good Friday to accurse us as damned heretics, we curse not him, but pray for him, that he, with all his partakers, either may be turned to a better truth; or else, we pray Thee, gracious LORD, that we never agree with him in doctrine, and that he may so curse us still, and never bless us more, as he blessed us in Queen Mary's time. GOD, of Thy mercy keep away that blessing from us."

There is a grim facetiousness, of the Spurgeonesque style, attempted here which is inexpressibly revolting. In tone it reminds one of the Scotch Presbyterian minister who had a quarrel with his laird, and threatened the latter that, if he would not come into his terms, he would "offer up" a prayer for him in public service next "Sabbath."

Of what nature, then, should prayer to GOD be?

With respect to hymnody, it has been said, (and the rule is generally admitted,) that a hymn should be "*an offering of praise to God,*" as His due. Those compositions which sing to ourselves of our own feelings or sorrows are not hymns, in the true sense of the word.

So also with respect to adoration: adoration should be the *offering of prayer to God,* as His due.

The soul, when she approaches the Throne of GOD in prayer, looks ever upward—not to herself. She casts herself and her burden of sin at the feet of her LORD, and, giving thanks to Him for His great glory, salutes Him as her LORD GOD, her Heavenly King, GOD her FATHER Almighty. She lays her troubles, her doubts, her manifold temptations simply before Him, and prays Him by His Agony and Bloody Sweat, by His Cross and His Passion, to have mercy upon her. By every attribute which He has revealed to her, by every loving act which He has done for her, by the mystery of the Holy Incarnation, by the Manger of Bethlehem, by the obedient life of Nazareth, by the Cross of Calvary, by the Burial in the Garden, by the Easter Resurrection, by the Ascension of the Man Who is her GOD to His Mediatorial Throne of Intercession in the Presence of the Consubstantial FATHER, thence to send down the HOLY GHOST the Comforter to the hearts of the faithful—thereby to come *Himself* to the comfortless heart, by the power of the same HOLY GHOST, upon the Altars of the Church,—by all these acts of infinite love, of all these acts of mercy, she makes memorial before her LORD, and beseeches Him to hear her.

She pauses not to ask how.

She reasons not as to the mystery whereby the will of the Unchangeable can repent Him of the evil, and be turned aside by the petitions of sinful man.

A child stands in a boat which tosses unstably off the shore. In his hand he holds a cable, and with it he pulls strongly at an anchor

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fixed in the beach. He seems to himself to be drawing the shore to him. All the time he himself is drawing nearer to the immoveable shore.

So it is with the soul. She knows well that, in the very agony of prayer, she is finding GOD drawing yet nearer and nearer to herself—herself nearer and nearer to that eternal shore, where no tempests toss the boat, and the sea of glass lies wind-bound in the sunlight of GOD's smile.

Therefore it is that in the Prayers of the Church, (both in the public ones which she uses, and the private ones which she sanctions,) there is an entire absence of that selfish introspection which marks the effusions of the conventicle. The Incarnate CHRIST is ever the centre-point of her adoration. He it is whom she keeps before her eyes in all her acts of worship, for it is through Him alone that those acts of worship become efficacious before GOD. And this we must keep in mind in treating of the Prayers of the Church.

And now what are these Prayers?

We take our Prayer Book, and we find that part of its contents, which is concerned with public worship, to be divisible into two great portions with a clear line of demarcation between them. These are—

1. Morning and Evening Prayer; commonly called *Matins and Evensong*.

2. The order of the ministration of the *Holy Communion*.

With the latter I am not much concerned now. Suffice it to observe, that within the shadow of that august and tremendous service is the fountain-head of Christian life itself. For there GOD Almighty ministers Himself in the Body and Blood of the Incarnation for the union of the faithful to Himself by the communication of His glorified humanity, and for the presentation before the eyes of the All-Holy FATHER of the only sacrifice (offered once for all upon Calvary,) which can put away sin, inasmuch as it is the only sacrifice in which both priest and victim are holy and free from sin. No other service can be mentioned in the same breath with this. It is essentially "*God's* service," whereas, all other forms of devotion being merely human compilations, can claim no higher title than "*Man's* Service." The latter indeed are merely supplementary to the former. The latter are mere forms of speech, whereas the former presents to us an objective reality—the Presence of our LORD JESUS CHRIST amongst His own.

Henry III. said to the monk who was angry because the king had preferred to attend the Celebration rather than go to the monk's sermon—"I had much rather see my friend, than hear him talked about." A speech to be remembered, and somewhat applicable to our present comparison.

This service then of the Holy Communion is distinct in itself; and we need not pause to consider it now.

We are treating of Family Prayer, and we pass on to the other

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division to which Family Prayer is most akin,—the division which comprises "Morning and Evening Prayer," or "Matins" and "Evensong." Now whence come they? Were they made at that period of religious convulsion to which we generally give the name of the Reformation? So far from being *made* then, they were not even *compiled* then. The fact is, that these two great services are merely abridged editions of the Seven Hours of Prayer which have been observed from the earliest period of the Christian Church in commemoration of the great acts of the Passion of the SAVIOUR.

"Seven times a day do I praise Thee," said David, "because of Thy righteous judgments." And the Church thus moulded her *sevenfold* scheme of prayer, commemorating an act of the Passion at each one of them. We must describe shortly these hours of prayer, as the subject has, (as you will presently see,) a direct bearing on the question of Family Prayer. The names of these seven hours of prayer were as follows:

1. *Matins.* This office was said between midnight and sunrise. In it was commemorated the seizing of our Blessed LORD in the Garden.

2. Next, at the first hour of the day, i.e., 6 o'clock in the morning, came *Prime,* at the hour when our LORD stood before the judgment-seat of Pilate.

3. *Tierce,* or the Third Hour, when they led JESUS away to be crucified, said at 9 o'clock. Also in this service commemoration is made of the descent of the HOLY GHOST at this Hour on Whitsun Day.

4. *Sext,* or the Sixth Hour, when JESUS was crucified. This office was said at mid-day.

5. *None,* or the Ninth Hour, (3 o'clock, P.M., hence our "Noon,") when JESUS died.

6. *Vespers,* or "Evensong," when the Body of JESUS was taken down from the Cross.

7. *Compline,* the last of the hours, which was said at bed-time. It means the "*Completion*" of the day, and commemorates the burial of JESUS CHRIST in the tomb in the Garden. This last is a short and exceedingly beautiful hour. These four memorial lines from Durandus give the Seven "Canonical" Hours, as they are called, in their due order:—

> "At *Matins* bound, at *Prime* reviled, condemned to death at *Tierce;*
> Nailed to the Cross at *Sext;* at *None* His blessed side they pierce:
> They take Him down at *Vesper-tide;* in Grave at *Compline* lay,
> Who thenceforth bids His Church observe her sevenfold hours alway."

The recitation of these Seven Hours of Prayer in choir, was strictly observed by the monastic orders before the Reformation. As to how far they ever were used as a public office for the people, is a question about which there is some doubt. They are exceedingly beautiful, and the loss to the English Church was not small

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when the four principal Hours were condensed for the purpose of forming the morning and evening daily service of the English Church.

And now to describe shortly what was the substance of these Hours of Prayer. The main part of them consists of the Psalms. The Psalter is so arranged as to be said right through from beginning to end within the week. By far the longest office is Matins. If this service were sung, I suppose it would not be finished much under two hours. Except among the monastic orders, Matins is never sung daily, nor even weekly, in choir now in any part of the Western Church. It is used sometimes in large churches abroad on the eve of a festival, not (as of old,) in the early morning, but overnight. Before the Midnight Celebration on Christmas Eve, for instance, Matins is sometimes sung. I have heard it so used myself, and I remember that Matins began at 10 at night, and was not finished till close upon midnight, when the celebration began—

It begins with the V. and R.

V. O LORD, open Thou my lips.
R. *And my mouth shall show forth Thy praise.*

and then the V. and R. which all the hours begin with—

V. O GOD, make speed to save me.
R. *O Lord, make haste to help me.*

Then, after the Gloria and Allelnia, ("Praise ye the LORD" of our office) comes the *Venite*, "O come, let us sing unto the LORD," followed by the *Hymn*. (Our modern Anglican Matins has not kept the Hymn in this place.) Next follow the Psalms, between ten and twenty in number, according to the day of the week, each day having its own Psalms. At the end of the Psalms, (or at the end of each triple division of them,) come the *Lessons*. On an ordinary day, the lessons amount to three in number; but on a Sunday there are no less than nine. These Lessons were for the most part readings from the Scripture of the Old and New Testament in order, much as ours are, but in form they were much more flexible, and in effect much less wearisome. For each Lesson contained only about half-a-dozen verses, and was followed by what was called a *Responsory*. This was one of the most beautiful things in the whole Breviary. It would not perhaps do for congregational use; and that was doubtless the cause of its rejection from the Common Prayer. But it was a great loss so far as beauty goes, no doubt. Here is a specimen of the Lesson and its Responsory.

Each Lesson ends with the exclamation, "*But Thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us.*" In Holy Week, instead of this, is used the plaintive refrain, "*Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return unto the Lord thy God.*"

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### Lesson I. 1 Sam. xvii. 1.

Now the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together at Shochoh, which belongeth to Judah, and pitched between Shochoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim. And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and pitched by the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines. And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side: and there was a valley between them. And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. And he had a helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass. And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him. But Thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us.

℟. *Thanks be to God.*

℟. *Prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.*

℣. If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods from among you.

*And He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.*

### Lesson II.

And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? . . . When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid. But Thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us.

℟. *Thanks be to God.*

℟. *God is the avenger of all men. He hath sent His angel, and hath taken me from my father's sheep: and hath anointed me with the oil of His mercy.*

℣. The Lord hath delivered me out of the mouth of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear.

*And hath anointed me with the oil of His mercy.*

### Lesson III.

Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Beth-lehem-judah, whose name was Jesse. . . . And the Philistine drew near, morning and evening, and presented himself forty days. But Thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us.

℟. *Thanks be to God.*

℟. *The Lord Who delivered me out of the mouth of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He shall deliver me from the hands of mine enemies.*

℣. God hath sent forth His mercy and truth; my soul is among lions.

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*He shall deliver me from the hands of mine enemies.*
Glory be to the FATHER, &c.
*He shall deliver me from the hands of mine enemies.*

Such were the Responsories for an ordinary Sunday. Here is a specimen of those which were provided to follow the Lessons for the festival of S. Laurence, a saint's day:—

(LESSON I., from Ecclesiasticus.)

℟. *Laurence the deacon wrought a good work, who enlightened the blind by the sign of the Cross; and he gave the treasures of the Church to the poor.*
℣. He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor, and his righteousness remaineth for ever.
*And he gave the treasures of the Church to the poor.*

(LESSON II. Ecclus., continued.)

℟. *My child, be not afraid, for I am with thee, saith the Lord. When thou passest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the smell of fire pass upon thee.*
℣. I will deliver thee from the bond of the wicked, and rescue thee from the hand of the mighty.
*When thou passest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the smell of fire pass upon thee.*

(LESSON III. Ecclus., continued.)

℟. *They bound down his limbs upon the bars; but while they ministered live coals, the deacon of Christ laughs them to scorn. Blessed Laurence, Martyr of Christ, intercede for us.*
℣. My night has no darkness, but all things grow clear in the light.
*Blessed Laurence, Martyr of Christ, intercede for us.*
Glory be to the FATHER, &c.
*Blessed Laurence, Martyr of Christ, intercede for us.*

Then follows the Second Nocturn, or division of the Matin Office, with its Psalms; at the end of which occur the 4th, 5th, and 6th Lessons, being in this instance passages taken from a sermon of S. Leo, recounting and commenting on the acts of S. Laurence. It may be necessary to premise, before giving the next Responsories, that S. Laurence's Bishop had been seized and carried to martyrdom before the arrest of his deacon S. Laurence.

(LESSON IV., from S. Leo.)

℟. *Whither speedest thou without thy son, O my father? Whither hurriest thou, holy priest, without thy deacon? Thou never yet hast offered sacrifice without attendant.*
℣. What hath in me displeased thy fatherly love? In what have I come short? Make trial of his fitness to whom thou hast entrusted the dispensation of the LORD'S Blood.
*Thou never yet hast offered sacrifice without attendant.*

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(LESSON V.)

℟. *Forsake me not, O holy father, for I have already laid out my stores. I desert thee not, my son, neither do I forsake thee; but a fiercer conflict for the faith of Christ is in store for thee.*

℣. We, as aged men, receive the onset of the skirmish; thou, being young, wilt have to bear off a more glorious triumph over the persecutors. The deacon shall follow his bishop on the third day.

*I desert thee not, my son, neither do I forsake thee; but a fiercer conflict for the faith of Christ is in store for thee.*

(LESSON VI.)

℟. *Blessed Laurence cried out and said, My God I worship, Him alone I serve, and therefore I fear not your tortures.*

℣. My night hath no darkness, but all things grow clear in the light.

*And therefore I fear not your tortures.*

Glory be to the FATHER, &c.

*And therefore I fear not your tortures.*

I will give one more specimen of these exquisite Saints'-day Responsories; it is that which is appointed to follow the lessons for S. Agnes' day. I use the translation given by Dr. Neale in p. 33 of his "Essays on Liturgiology and Church History:"—

(LESSON I.)

℟. *Celebrate we the feast of the holy Virgin; how blessed Agnes suffered, let us recall to memory; in the thirteenth year of her age she lost death, and found life; because she loved the alone Author of life.*

℣. Reckoned by years, hers was infancy: but the old age of her mind was venerable.

*Because she loved the alone Author of life.*

(LESSON II.)

℟. (reciting the words of S. Agnes.) *He hath rounded my neck and my arms with precious stones. He hath given to my ears inestimable pearls: and He hath endued me with bright and sparkling gems.*

℣. He hath set a sign upon my face, that I should own no lover but Himself.

*And He hath endued me with bright and sparkling gems.*

(LESSON III.)

℟. *Christ I love, into Whose bridal-chamber I shall enter: Whose Mother is a Virgin, Whose Father knows not woman, the melody of Whose notes already resounds in my ear: Whom when I shall have loved I am chaste; when I shall have touched, I am pure; when I shall have received, I am a virgin.*

℣. With the ring of His faith He hath plighted me to Himself: and hath adorned me with priceless jewels.

*Whom when I shall have loved, I am chaste; when I shall have touched, I am pure; when I shall have received, I am a virgin.*

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(LESSON IV.)

℟. *Come, Bride of Christ, receive the crown which the Lord hath prepared for thee for ever; for Whose love thou hast poured forth thy blood: and thou hast entered with Angels into Paradise.*

℣. Come, My elect, and I will set thee upon My throne, because the King hath desired thy beauty.

*And thou hast entered with Angels into Paradise.*

Glory be to the FATHER, &c.

*And thou hast entered with Angels into Paradise.*

Besides the Responsory we ought to mention the *Antiphon* or *Anthem;* the word is the same, though our Anthem is not quite the same thing as the ancient Antiphon. This Antiphon was a short verse, generally from Holy Scripture, inserted as a prelude to each (or nearly each) of the Psalms. It was intended to give the key-note, as it were, to the Psalm for the day. This it does by selecting for itself some text, which gives a colour to the preceding Psalm in the desired direction; or by taking a verse of the Psalm itself, the connection of which, in idea, with the teaching of the day is evident, and gives the key-note to the Psalm.

Thus, in the Matin Office for Easter Eve, the Antiphon runs thus:

*Antiphon.* I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest.

*Psalm* iv.

Hear me when I call, O GOD of my righteousness: Thou hast set me at liberty when I was in trouble; have mercy on me, and hearken unto my prayer.

O ye sons of men, how long will ye blaspheme Mine honour? &c. (nine verses.)

*Antiphon.* I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest.

Notice how here the colour is given to the Psalm by the stress laid on its last verse used as an Antiphon, and directing the mind to the rest of our LORD in death.

The next Psalm is the xvth. "LORD, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle?" &c. The Antiphon is, "*He shall dwell in Thy tabernacle; he shall rest upon Thy holy hill.*"

The next is Psalm xvi. "Preserve me, O GOD; for in Thee have I put my trust." Its Antiphon, "*My flesh shall rest in hope.*"

Then Psalm xxiv. "The earth is the LORD'S and all that therein is." Its Antiphon, "Be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in." It will be noticed here that the Latin Church, by her use of this verse for an Easter Eve Antiphon, applied the prophetic meaning of this text not to the

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Ascension of our Blessed LORD, but to His Descent into Hell. Thus Lævinus Torrentius sings of Easter Eve. His words may be rendered in English:

"Leaving His Body on the Cross of Death,
That Conqueror Soul must enter Hell's domain;
There must He quell the King who reigns beneath,
And bear the prize of Victory back again:
Come, comrades! lo, our Leader goes before:
That path, as yet untracked, untracked shall be no more."

Of this kind, then, was the ancient Antiphon. There is no doubt that their wholesale suppression in our Book of Common Prayer is a great loss to us so far as concerns the beauty and significance of the services.

Matins was followed, without any interval, by its supplementary service, called "*Lauds*," or the "Praises." It is, although structurally a complete office in itself, always reckoned as a part of *Matins*. Matins ends with the great song of SS. Ambrose and Augustine; and just as the thunders of the Te Deum die away, the dawn creeps up into the sky, and upward to Heaven swells the sweet Laudal Hymn of Prudentius (fourth century:)

"The winged herald of the day
Proclaims the morn's approaching ray,
And CHRIST the LORD our souls excites,
And so to endless life invites.

"With earnest cry, with tearful care,
Call we the LORD to hear our prayer;
While supplication, pure and deep,
Forbids each chastened heart to sleep.

"Do Thou, O CHRIST, our slumbers wake;
Do Thou the chains of darkness break;
Purge Thou our former sins away,
And in our souls new light display."

The Laudal Canticle is the *Benedictus*, which still keeps its place as then, towards the close of Matins in our service.

After Matins comes *Prime*, or the first hour, at 6 o'clock, A.M., a fine service, containing, after its Psalms, the Athanasian Creed. Then what are called the three lesser Hours, the third, sixth, and ninth hours (Tierce, Sext, and None,) which divide Psalm cxix. among them, and about which I have no time to say more now.

Then the great *Vesper Service*, or Evensong: the only one of the seven canonical Hours which is now used by the Church abroad in public worship every Sunday. Its great feature is the *Magnificat*, the Canticle of the Incarnation, which is always sung with swinging censers, and a high degree of Ritual, as is fitting.

*Compline* is the next and last Hour. Its main distinctive features are the *Nunc Dimittis* as its Canticle, and the recitation of the Apostles' Creed in the body of the Office.

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It will be noticed that Evensong of our Common Prayer is simply a condensation of Vespers and Compline. Every feature appears in the same order.

Introductory Versicles,
Psalms,
Magnificat,
Chapter,
Nunc Dimittis,
Creed,
Versicles,
Collects.

As a congregational service, for an *educated* congregation, the palm must be given to the Anglican Evensong. A foreign Catholic hears the same fixed five Vesper Psalms, week after week, with no variation, for the natural period of his life, and also nearly always the same Chapter; whereas the Anglican Office varies from day to day in both these elements, which form the main substance of the Office. Of course the Vesper Office, as all the other Hours, is always sung in Latin. For an uneducated congregation, and for missionary purposes the Vesper service, from its simplicity, would be certainly far superior to ours, if it were used in the vulgar tongue.

Such, then, were the public choir services of the Church. They were, you see, of surpassing beauty, but too long and too intricate for general use in private and family prayer.

Did the Church then not provide for this want?

She provided for it fully; and in this way—

Side by side with the great Breviary office of the Seven Canonical Hours of Prayer, we find, from time immemorial, a much shorter and simpler book of offices in the vernacular, built upon the very same stocks as the Latin services which I have been describing.

The public service consisted of the Seven Hours of Prayer, *Matins, Prime, Tierce, Sext, None, Vespers* (or *Evensong,*) and *Compline*: so did the Private Book.

The public service had its set Psalms, Antiphons, Lessons, and Responsories—so had the Private Book.

But where the two books differed was thus. Whereas the Public Book used sometimes no less than twenty Psalms to a single service, the Private Book never used more than five, and seldom more than three.

And whereas the Public Book went through the whole Psalter once a week, using different Psalms in their order day by day; the Private Book kept its Psalms fixed, admitting variety only in the use of various subsidiary services for penitential seasons and so forth.

The origin of these Private Offices is quite lost in remote antiquity. The earliest versions of which we know are in Latin, and

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were revised by S. Peter Damian, about the time of the Norman Conquest. That gives us some idea of the age of the book, and the learned author of "*Monumenta Ritualia*" quietly observes that the book was probably in use many centuries before that comparatively recent date in the life of the Church.

The earliest specimen in English which we possess, dates about the year 1410. There are plenty of them in existence, dating downwards from that period.

The book is called "THE PRIMER," and bears these different titles—

The Primer of Salisbury.
The Primer both in English and Latin.
The Primer set forth at large.
The Primer in English.

This beautiful book was the authorized book of Family Prayer in the English Church. There never has been another,[1] nor have I ever seen any private compilation which seemed to be its equal for ordinary practical use. The author of "*Monumenta Ritualia*" thus speaks of it:—

"The Primer passed on from age to age, gradually collecting now an office and then a prayer, at one time the Penitential Psalms, at another the Litany, at another the Dirge, until at last it arrived at the state in which, with little further alteration, it remained during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, always a known book, *authorized and distributed by the English Church.*"—*Monumenta Ritualia, vol. ii., p.* 48.

At the time of the Reformation, as we all know, the Public Offices underwent revision. There was much cutting down and paring, often of a somewhat truculent kind, but little new matter was introduced. The use of the Seven Canonical Hours in the Sanctuary worship was discontinued, and an attempt was made to adapt their substance and form to congregational use, by reducing the number of Psalms in each service, and condensing the Seven Hours into two great daily services—the Modern Matins and Evensong of the Anglican Church. The Psalter, instead of being said weekly, was to be said monthly. The Lessons, instead of being fixed to the day of the month, were, on Sundays, to be endued with that beautiful variety which we all know and value too universally for the need of my dwelling longer on it here. Thus were the Public Choir Offices revised.

But how fared it with the Private Offices?

What became of the *Primer?*

It was revised by the Reformers on precisely the same principle. But mark this.

[1] I take no notice of a shortlived book of family prayer called the "Primer," compiled and published in the reign of Edward VI. It had nothing in common with the real Primer except the name, and soon perished as it deserved.

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The Seven Canonical Hours of Prayer are impracticable for daily congregational use in parish churches.

But they are not impracticable in the oratory.

And, therefore, when the Reforming Bishops revised the Primer, (which they did very thoroughly,) they kept the Seven Hours of Prayer as they stood, but reduced the amount of Psalms to a level with that in the Public Services.

Our present Book of Common Prayer, as you know, dates as finally established from the second year of Queen Elizabeth, 1559.

That very same year which saw the Common Prayer put forth for use, saw also the final edition of the Primer issue from the same hands whence the Common Prayer came forth revised.

I think that this is not only a very interesting fact, but a very important one, for what was put forth with authority then, certainly remains with authority now; and the fact really is, that the English Church owns the Seven Hours of Prayer as her authoritative Catholic inheritance in the Primer. In the year following (1560) a Latin edition of the Primer, called the "*Horarium*," was published with royal authority.

I will now shortly describe the Primer as we possess it—

Its title is this—

THE PRIMER
set furth at large,
with many godly
and devoute
Prayers.
*Anno* 1559.

¶ Imprinted at London
by the Assignes of John Wayland,
forbyddyng all other to
prynt this or any other
Prymer.

¶ Cum privilegio ad imprimendum solum.

Then comes the Kalendar, followed by the Creed, the LORD'S Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, with a very admirable collection of graces, both before and after meals. One of these graces is of such venerable antiquity, as to be quoted at full length by S. Chrysostom as of unknown age in his day, (the Fourth Century!) It is also alluded to by the great S. Athanasius himself in the same century.

These are the words used by S. Chrysostom on the subject of this most interesting grace:—

"I praise and admire the Monks who have taken up their abode in the Desert, (the Egyptian Desert,) for this office among other things.

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For they, after having breakfasted, or rather after dinner,—for they know nothing of breakfast, being well assured that the present is a season of sorrow and fasting,—after dinner then, when saying grace to GOD, they offer also this memorial chant. And if you are desirous of hearing their hymn, in order that you yourselves also may constantly say it, I will repeat to you all that sacred Ode. The words of it then run thus:—Blessed be GOD, who hast fed me from my tender age, and givest sustenance to all flesh. Replenish our hearts with joy and gladness, that we alway having sufficient may abound unto every good work in CHRIST JESUS our LORD; with whom to Thee be glory, honour, and might, with the HOLY GHOST, for ever and ever. Amen. Glory to Thee, O LORD; Glory to Thee, O Holy One; Glory to Thee, O King, for Thou hast given us meat for gladness. Fill us with the HOLY SPIRIT, that we may be found well pleasing in Thy sight, and may not be ashamed when Thou renderest to every man according to his works. In every respect, therefore, this Hymn is worthy of admiration, but especially this ending."—*Homily on S. Matth.* xvi. 24.

Then follow the Seven Hours of Prayer, *Matins and Lauds*, *Prime, Third Hour, Sixth Hour, Ninth Hour, Evensong, Compline*.

In the Common Prayer the average amount of Psalms to each public service is three. In the occasional services, (burial, marriage, &c.,) only one, with a second added for use, if desired.

So also in the Reformed Primer. The greater hours, *Matins* and *Evensong*, have their three Psalms each assigned, while the lesser hours have only one each. *Compline*, (said at bedtime,) which in the breviary has an uneven number of Psalms, retains that peculiarity in the Reformed Primer, which assigns two Psalms to that office.

The three unchanging lessons for Matins are chosen from the Scripture which relates to the Great Annunciation of the Incarnation on Lady Day, brought to the ears of Mary by the Angel Gabriel. It was thought that the ears and hearts of the faithful would never weary in hearing that.

The Compline Office is exceedingly beautiful and simple. A description of it, (as I am already trespassing on your patience as regards length of lecture,) may do duty for any more detailed account of the other hours. It begins thus:

Turn us, O GOD, our SAVIOUR,
*And let Thine anger cease from us.*
O GOD, make speed to save us,
*O Lord, make haste to help us.*
Glory be.
As it was.
Alleluia.

Then this beautiful antiphon—

"Save us, good LORD, waking, and keep us sleeping, that we may wake in CHRIST, and rest in peace."

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After this comes Psalm xiii., containing the petition in verse 4, "Lighten mine eyes, that I sleep not in death;" and then Psalm xliii. which has the petition, in v. 3,

"O send out Thy light and Thy truth, that they may lead me, and bring me unto Thine holy hill, and to Thy dwelling."

After which the antiphon is repeated again.

"Save us, good LORD, waking, and keep us sleeping; that we may wake in CHRIST, and rest in peace."

Then a text from Holy Scripture, called the "Chapter."

"Thou, O LORD, art in the midst of us, and we are called by Thy name, leave us not, O LORD our GOD.
℟. *Thanks be to God.*"

Then this short hymn—

"Maker of all created things,
As shades of night descend,
Beneath the shadow of Thy wings
Our weary souls defend.

"May no ill dream of haunted sleep,
Beguile our souls within,
To Thee our heart her Vigil keep,
Nor give consent to sin.

"Almighty FATHER, by Thy SON
Accept our prayer to Thee,
Whom with the HOLY SPIRIT One,
We praise eternally. Amen.

"℣. Whoso dwelleth under the defence of the Most High.
℟. *Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*"

Then follows the "NUNC DIMITTIS," preceded and followed by this most lovely antiphon—

"Grant us, O LORD, Thy light; that we being delivered from the darkness of our hearts, may come to the true light which is CHRIST."

(Notice how that antiphon performs its office in striking the key-note of the Nunc Dimittis, which sings of the Advent of GOD's Salvation, "to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of the Israel of GOD.")

Then comes the collect, "Lighten our darkness," and the office closes with the V. and R., "Let us bless the LORD." "*Thanks be to God.*"

Can there be a simpler and more beautiful little office than this for ordinary wear and tear?

The Primer contains also a penitential office called the "*Dirge*," with its own Matins, Lauds, and Evensong. Matins is remarkable among other things for its beautiful Responsories, and Lauds for the fact that it contains Prayers for the departed.

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The following are the Responsories to the three Lessons of the Dirge:—

LESSON I. Job x. 8.

Thine hands have made me, and fashioned me together round about, yet Thou dost destroy me, &c.

℟. *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.*

℣. Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.

*And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.*

LESSON II. S. John v. 24.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word and believeth on him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life, &c., &c.

℟. *Brethren, I would not have you to be ignorant concerning them which are asleep; that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope.*

℣. For if we believe that JESUS died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in JESUS, will GOD bring with Him.

*That ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*

LESSON III. 1 Cor. xv. 51.

Behold I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, &c.

℟. *Deliver me, Good Lord, from eternal death in that dreadful day when the heaven and the earth shall be moved, and Thou shalt judge the world by fire: This day is the day of ire, of wretchedness and misery, the great day, and very bitter.*

℣. Deliver not to beasts, O LORD, the souls of them that confess Thee, and forget not at length the souls of Thy poor people.

*This day is the day of ire, of wretchedness and misery, the great day and very bitter.*

The rest of the Book is occupied by collections of Psalms, Psalms of the Passion, Seven Penitential Psalms, Commendatory Psalms, Litany, &c., and by Prayers in much abundance for different occasions.

Thus much for the contents of the Primer. I could give you many more interesting details respecting it, but time forbids.

The Primer continued in use till the Great Rebellion, but the flood of Calvinism which washed over everything Catholic in that inundation, swamped the Common Prayer itself, and the Primer was not the sort of book to suit the taste of the eighteenth cen-

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tury, which intervened between that time and this since the restoration of the Common Prayer.[1]

Hence its disuse with us. But I question whether it *ought* to be disused, and therefore I have had so much pleasure in choosing this subject, for lecturing before the body which represents the convalescent Catholicism of Bristol.

And now for a few practical suggestions about the mode of conducting Family Prayer. And first, as to the hours at which it should be held. It is customary, as we all know, for families to meet for prayers before breakfast. I do not think that this is the best time for Family Prayer. Speaking from experience I should decidedly say, that it is much better to have them *after* breakfast, for these reasons amongst others. In the first place, there is generally somewhat of a *scramble* to ante-prandial prayers. We all know what it is. Just as one is brushing one's teeth (or before one has begun to do so, as the case may be,) ding, ding, ding goes the prayer-bell. With a jump we dash down the brush, and seize our neck-tie. On with it anyhow, and down stairs at express pace, to find that one has to open the dining-room door across the cook's petticoat, who is kneeling just inside with her face to the wainscot—prayers having begun.

In the second place, even if you are in good time, there is always a certain feeling of impatience during prayers before breakfast. Not only have you just finished your own devotions, and asked GOD for His help towards the supply of all that you need; there are other causes—evils, if you like, to which flesh is heir, but still causes—which must be taken into account in a practical consideration of a question like the present. It is all very well to say, that carnal considerations ought not to find their way into a subject so solemn. That is all very well. Perhaps they ought not. But for all that, if you have anything but the very shortest prayers before breakfast, you will most assuredly have members of the family thinking of the coffee which is standing there made, and no less assuredly will you have the cook (if indeed she is able to come at all before breakfast,) thinking of those muffins which she has left before the fire. This is the simple, plain fact.

Again there is another very strong objection indeed to prayers before breakfast, an objection which I think would be pretty final in itself. What happens *after* prayers? People rise from their knees, and immediately a flood of conversation begins. And this conversation is usually not merely connected with plans for the coming day, nor even principally so. It is generally all about the reminiscences of the evening before:—jokes as to what has happened at the concert or party. Did Arabella see that ghost last night which Jones told her of? and so forth. Now I will ask any

[1] A modern edition of the Primer has been published by Mr. Masters, and seems to be getting into general use again.

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one here present—is it a fact, or is it not a fact, that a consideration of these facetious remarks invades our brain and runs away with our fancy, as we kneel at our prayers immediately before enunciating them? I say that it is apt to do so; and further, that we are not justified in exposing needlessly the members of our family to a temptation which may be made bad use of by Satan.

If, on the other hand, we have prayer directly after breakfast, none of these objections apply. There is a pause before beginning the day's occupations, which may well be filled by Family Prayers. The servants are not yet busy; and, as to their betters, they have pretty well drained off their ideas at breakfast, and so are more disposed to give full attention; and besides, they are not now half so snappish as they were when they first came down unbreakfasted.

Add to this that they will certainly all be there; for of one hundred people who will miss prayers, ninety-nine will certainly not miss breakfast. If I were speaking about religious orders I might speak differently perhaps. But I am not. I am speaking about ordinary people of flesh and blood, whom one meets every day in the streets; and for such it is necessary to take all these sublunary matters into consideration.

Next as to the arrangements for Family Prayer. How people are to stand, kneel, sit, &c.

I suppose it is a safe thing to say, that the best arrangement will be that which is furthest removed from the arrangement which is commonly adopted by modern Englishmen. I say by "*modern*" Englishmen advisedly, for our forefathers knew better. If you go into any church (mine for instance,) which has monuments more than a century old, you will see statuettes of the father of the family, kneeling at a low prie-dieu desk, with all his family kneeling *behind* him (not all kneeling in a radius round the room, with their backs towards him and their faces towards the four walls,) but all praying in the same direction. This is better than the modern plan, though not quite practicable for Family Prayer in every respect.

The present arrangement is most meaningless, and might be called slovenly, were it not adopted with no careless intention, but simply because people have not thought about it. "There are the people and there are the chairs. Sit upon the chairs to hear: kneel, with your elbows on the chair-seat and your face through the chair-back, to pray."

That is the argument which will pass through the mind of any one, if he ever thought of arguing on the subject.

But really it is only necessary to direct attention to the badness of the arrangement, to win assent to the assertion of its impropriety, without further argument.

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What then will be the correct arrangement? *That which recognises a* PRESENCE *in the midst of us.*

"Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I *in the midst* of them."

And our position in Family Prayers ought to be a recognition of this Presence. If JESUS CHRIST is in the midst of us, who are we that we should turn our backs upon Him?

Let then the ordinary manner of kneeling reversed round the room be condemned at once upon principle.

How then to arrange?

Let us suppose some such Office as the Compline (or Night Prayers) of the Primer, being said in a family of any numbers down to three.

The bell rings, the servants come in, and all take their places on three sides of the room, leaving perhaps one wall (it does not matter which, but one of the end walls is best) unoccupied. They all remain sitting while a portion of Scripture or some suitable book is read by the master (or mistress, as the case may be.)

After this is concluded the master shuts his Bible, takes up his Book of Offices, and begins, "In the Name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST," he and all standing. Where and how he is to stand is of no consequence; and each head of a family will arrange such things best for himself. He then proceeds with the V. and R. (in Compline after "Turn us, O GOD," &c.)

O GOD, make speed to save us.
*O Lord, make haste to help us.*

Then the Gloria and the Psalms of the Office. After that the *Hymn*, which (if not sung) may be read line by line alternately by the master and the worshippers, followed by the *Canticle* and (on occasion) the *Apostles' Creed.* Then he says, "*Let us pray,*" and reads the *Collect*, followed by any prayers which he may select from the collection in the book for different occasions and times.

The question is, what is to be the position during these prayers? Most people will say at once, "*kneel.*" But I have had practical experience of this type of Family Prayer for a great many years, and my suggestion is to remain *standing.* For in united worship the great element is, as I have already said, *Praise* rather than *Prayer.* It is, therefore, hardly worth while to arrange for a different posture for the latter in family worship, when (if it comes in at all,) it is introduced at the end in a subordinate manner.

But it is a matter of opinion of course, and people may disagree with me. In such a case, I say, "kneel down as you stand; in the same place and direction, without turning round to the wall." Certainly if any litany is used you *must* kneel, and then that would be the position. It may be added, that everybody ought to have

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a book, and this is the only position in which the worshippers can see to read their books.

These few observations I have ventured to lay before you, brethren of the English Church Union.

At first I felt a reluctance to treat so serious and solemn a subject from a public platform. Not merely did I shrink from the apparent presumption of thus handling it; but it seemed to me at first sight dangerous to throw down for approval or disapproval, thoughts on that which forms a link which unites heaven and earth, the soul of Man with the undying love of the Eternal.

Yet I am addressing no ordinary assembly, nor one, I believe, gathered together by a mere feeling of curiosity. We members of the E. C. U. are engaged in a great struggle, and the cause for which we fight is the cause of GOD and His everlasting truth. Our armour will be as nothing, our swords mere brittle steel, unless all be dipped in the glowing furnace of Divine love, kindled by the breath of constant prayer.

"I believe in the HOLY GHOST; the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints."

This is the watchword of us Catholics, with which we are prepared, through much suffering, to carry out our sacramental oath, to "fight manfully under the banner of our LORD, against sin, the world, and the devil."

And where is the work of that Communion of Saints so efficacious for obtaining GOD's blessing, as when men pray always, lifting up holy hands to the one FATHER of all?

We remain praying below, and the mists of earth hang heavy before our sight. We see not how each utterance of prayer is gathered from our lips by the ministering Angels, and borne on high to feed the flame of the golden censer, whose smoke circles in sweet odours round the feet of GOD.

9 SE68

JOSEPH MASTERS AND SON, PRINTERS, ALDERSGATE STREET, LONDON.

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